



H1N1 Virus Partner Briefing

Influenza A (H1N1) Virus

August 12, 2009, 3 p.m.

Rhode Island: 201 confirmed positive cases, 76 hospitalized to date, 3 deaths
National Report: 50 states (including DC, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico & Virgin Islands) with 6,506 hospitalized cases, 436 deaths

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new guidance last week for schools (K-12) to help them prepare for the upcoming seasonal and H1N1 flu season. The CDC is now recommending that students and staff with influenza-like illness (ILI) stay home until they are free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. This represents a change from earlier guidance that people with ILI stay home for 7 days after symptoms began or until they had been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever was longer. The new guidance also includes steps that schools can take to reduce the spread of influenza in schools, such as separating students and staff with flu-like symptoms until they can be sent home. Finally, it suggests strategies that schools can use if the CDC finds that the flu starts causing more severe disease this fall. For the complete updated guidance, visit

<http://www.health.ri.gov/pandemicflu/swineflu/Advisory/SchoolAdvisory081209.pdf> To access the complete CDC guidance for K-12 schools, see <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/schoolguidance.htm>.

Practical steps parents can take to keep students healthy during the school year:

- **Remind children to practice good health habits at school** such as washing hands often with warm water and soap and covering their coughs. Children should also avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth, as germs can spread this way. Teach children to cough and sneeze into their elbows to prevent the spread of germs that cause the flu.
- **Give students hand gels for their backpacks.** Teach children to use alcohol-based hand gels to clean their hands before eating or after coughing and sneezing if soap and water are not available.
- **Report cases of influenza-like illness (ILI) to the school nurse.** Influenza-like illness is defined as fever plus cough or fever plus sore throat. Teach your child to go to the nurse if he or she has flu-like symptoms while at school.
- **Purchase cold-care products ahead of time.** Children should not be given aspirin to treat the flu, due to the risk of Reye's Syndrome. Check medicine labels to see if they contain aspirin. Teenagers and children over the age of 5 can take medicines without aspirin, such as Tylenol or Motrin, if they feel sick. Talk to your doctor before giving medicine to children younger than 4 years old.
- **Make alternate childcare plans ahead of time.** Children with flu-like symptoms should stay home from school until they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications such as Tylenol. Plan now for ways to provide care for your children if they are sick and need to stay home from school.

Additional Resources

HEALTH at <http://www.health.ri.gov> ; H1N1 Information Line (M-F 8:30am- 4:30pm) 401-222-8022

CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

WHO at <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>